

SPEECH

OF

HON. F. P. STANTON, OF TENNESSEE,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THURSDAY, JULY 27, 1848,

On the Message of the President in relation to the Boundaries of the Territories ceded by Mexico to the United States.

Mr. STANTON said:

MR. SPEAKER: The message before you naturally connects itself with the peace message which was communicated to us some two weeks ago. The manner in which these two papers have been received and treated here, is well calculated to excite profound surprise. They have been the occasion of a debate in which the widest latitude, not merely of subjects, but of language and denunciation, has been indulged. We have had the merits of this Administration so freely canvassed, that one gentleman went so far as to characterize the President as "*Polk the mendacious*," while we have not hesitated to enter boldly into the party questions which will engage the attention of the country in the approaching Presidential election. Following the example of other gentlemen, I propose to enter somewhat into this general discussion.

I was particularly struck with the warmth evinced by the chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means, [Mr. VINTON,] when he commented upon the letter which the President quotes as having been written, by his instructions, in reply to one from the Governor of Texas. In that letter, the President declares his belief that Texas is entitled to the whole territory east of the Bravo, from its source to its mouth.

The honorable chairman entered into a calculation of dollars and cents. He proclaimed that, according to the President's estimate of the value of the territory acquired by the treaty, the part of it thus proposed to be yielded to Texas, would be worth from fifty to seventy millions of dollars. The gentleman was indignant at the simple expression of opinion by the President, and exclaimed, with great excitement, "How dare he take part with Texas against the Government, whose President he is?"

When I reflected, sir, that the honorable gentleman, and his whole party, upon a similar question, took sides with *Mexico* against both Texas and the United States, the gentleman's indignation seemed to me to be even ludicrous. Whether the President's opinion be right or wrong, (I believe it is right,) I imagine there is some little difference between advocating the claim of Texas to this territory, after we have acquired it by treaty, and

sustaining that of the enemy, while we were fighting for it.

If the President would yield a liberal boundary to Texas, the favor is extended to one of the sister republics of this Confederacy. If the measure would increase the power, and influence, and glory of that State, it would detract nothing from the greatness of the Union. If it should somewhat add to the lustre of the former lone star, it would, at the same time, only heighten the splendor of the whole Federal constellation.

But it was far different with the position of the gentleman and his party. In time of war, they did not scruple to advocate the right of the enemy, not only to this territory, but even to that between the Nueces and the Bravo. They would have shorn our country of strength in that contest, in order to confer it upon the enemy. They should take the beam out of their own eye, before they speak of the mote in ours.

When the peace message was sent here, Mr. Speaker, it was received by gentlemen on the other side of this Chamber in a similar spirit. The chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means was prominent then also, as it is perhaps his duty to be, considering the position he occupies. He then declared he would never consent to the reference of that important message, until the President would first inform him by what authority he had established temporary governments in the conquered territory. This was an extraordinary announcement. But it was the signal of opposition to his party, and accordingly, to this day, the important subjects of that message have not been sent to the appropriate committees of this House.

The President informed us, that by the conclusion of the treaty of peace, his power to maintain any government in the ceded territories had ceased. The people were without government; it was our duty to give them institutions and laws; this could only be done by the reference of the message and the consequent action of the various committees. Yet the gentlemen of the opposition refuse to take this indispensable step towards the performance of a solemn duty.

The President also reminded us that we had procured an acknowledgment of the claims of our

plundered citizens, and that, by the treaty, it became our duty to pay them, as part consideration for the territory ceded. A board of commissioners to adjudicate these claims was recommended. These demands against Mexico were part of the causes which induced us to prosecute the war. We have fought the enemy, and poured out our blood freely to obtain justice to American citizens, and yet gentlemen are here quibbling and manœuvring to avoid the final measure necessary to complete the indemnity. No proposition has been made, or can be made, until the reference shall be voted.

But the message further informed us that we had acquired some important harbors on the Pacific Ocean, and that much valuable commerce was already carried on through those ports. It was necessary, without delay, to extend our revenue laws to that distant quarter, in order to protect the commerce of our citizens, as well as to collect the revenue to be derived from it. Yet all these important measures, pressing upon us with the weight of a great emergency, must be put aside and delayed for factious party purposes.

Sir, we have been presented with several resolutions for the final adjournment of Congress. But, while the majority of this House have twice passed such a resolution, they have done nothing to make their proposed adjournment possible, unless we should determine to go home without doing the most indispensable public business. It is fortunate that we have a Democratic Senate to send down to this House those important bills in reference to the new territory, which, according to present appearances, we shall never get from our own committees.

I understand the motive for these proceedings. Gentlemen are anxious to make the Democrats responsible for the length of this session of Congress. But I have no fears that the people will not comprehend the whole game, and form a correct judgment upon it. The responsibility will fall upon those who refuse to do the public business.

The pretext for this conduct, as avowed by the honorable gentleman from Ohio, [Mr. VINTON,] is to force the President to assign the grounds upon which he established temporary government in New Mexico. This question, and that respecting the military contributions exacted of the enemy, after having been abandoned or overlooked for many months, are now brought forward at the close of the session, when the only purpose they can possibly serve will be to embarrass, delay, and perhaps defeat, the most important and necessary measures. I remember well, sir, a debate in which you and I participated at the commencement of the last session of Congress, the subject of which was these very temporary governments. The members of the Opposition entered into that discussion with great ardor. But their spirits soon flagged. The subject was dropped; and I am sure, not only this House, but the country, was satisfied that the objections then urged were not pressed, only because they could not be sustained. From that time to this—a period of more than eighteen months—we have heard nothing of them.

Mr. SCHENCK inquired if the Democrats had not a majority of about seventy in that Congress?

Mr. STANTON. Yes; but that will scarcely explain the sudden and complete silence which fol-

lowed the first animated discussion of the subject. And besides, you have had the majority during this Congress, and yet the subject is now agitated for the first time.

Mr. SCHENCK. I introduced a resolution calling for information on this subject at the commencement of this session, in December last. It is now on the calendar.

Mr. STANTON. And there it has slept. Certainly the gentleman has not attempted to take up his resolution. His party has had the power to pass it almost at any time. No, sir; these excuses will not avail. The fact stands forth undisputed and indisputable, that this Whig House of Representatives, now, at the heel of this session, charge the President with the commission of grave and impeachable crimes, which they have looked on, in silent acquiescence, for eighteen months. While these bold usurpations were being perpetrated before their eyes, they did nothing to prevent them; they proposed no measure to arrest the President in his unconstitutional career. It is now only, when the war has ceased, and its alleged usurpations with it, that these gentlemen again recur to the old charges, which, after having been faintly urged, were summarily dropped more than eighteen months ago. Mr. Speaker, there can be only one motive for this course of proceeding. It must be, to embarrass and delay other measures, to wear away the remainder of this session of Congress, and to avoid the settlement of questions which will have an important bearing upon the Presidential election.

In reference to the military contributions, I shall make but a single remark. The question of their legality and constitutionality ought not to be used as a means of embarrassing other measures admitted to be just and proper. Such is the only object to be gained by the discussion of that question here and now. If gentlemen had been serious in their denunciation of this alleged usurpation by the President, they would have proposed an impeachment long since. Or, if they had not resorted to this extreme measure, they would at least have endeavored to prevent the continuance of a system of illegal exaction, which they very well knew to be in operation during the war. They did not attempt to stop it. Is it too much, then, to assert that they acquiesced? General Scott, the great Whig general, established a system of contributions before he had received any instructions or authority from the Government. We have his judgment, therefore, in favor of the legality and propriety of the proceeding. He is a great military commander, acquainted with the rights and duties of belligerent nations. He believed he had the power to exact contributions. If he could do so, much more could the President.

But, Mr. Speaker, why have gentlemen been so unwilling to permit these messages to have the usual reference? The present is not a time to be consumed in idle discussion. Prompt action is demanded. Yet I can readily conceive the motive which controls the Opposition in their strange proceedings. There are some things in the peace message which gentlemen do not wish to go to the people—at least without an effort to break their force upon the public mind. Yes, sir; the picture there presented is too encouraging—too glorious to the country and the Administration! The colors

must be softened and dimmed materially before they shall be submitted to the gaze of the public!

But the great facts cannot be concealed from the people. This Administration, and the Democratic party which has sustained it, cannot be deprived of the credit justly due to them for the magnificent results of the policy of the last four years. Gentlemen of the Opposition had been estimating the public debt at hundreds of millions of dollars; but now we have its exact amount stated in this message at sixty-five millions only, including the seventeen millions left by the Tyler Administration. Great financial difficulties and embarrassments were predicted; and the tariff of 1846 was pronounced wholly inadequate to the emergency. But all these sinister predictions have been falsified. We emerge from the war, with the public credit unshaken, aye, even firmer and better than it ever has been. The estimates of the Secretary of the Treasury have been fully realized; and thus the great free-trade tariff of 1846 has vindicated its immeasurable superiority over the antagonist system of 1842. And now the President tells us, with undeniable truth, that, under the operation of the existing Democratic system, there is every reason to believe that the public debt can be paid off before its maturity, from the accruing revenue, without any additional taxation. I repeat, sir, that this is a splendid picture of prosperity, to succeed that uninterrupted series of glorious achievements and brilliant victories which have marked the war from its commencement.

I do not wonder that those who have opposed everything, and predicted all kinds of ruin and disgrace to the country, should endeavor to counteract the impression which the full and fair announcement of these facts is calculated to produce. They seek to diminish the estimated value and importance of the new territory. But the chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means betrays a lurking distrust of his own judgment upon this subject, when he works himself into a rage at the prospect of yielding to Texas the territory as far as the Bravo. There would scarcely be so deep a solicitude in this respect, if that territory were really so worthless as gentlemen pretend to think it. No! It is far from being worthless. Its value to our people can hardly be estimated in dollars, and time will convince all men of the truth of this assertion. To the test of time—and no very long time either—I appeal with confidence.

The gentleman from Vermont [Mr. COLLAMER] adopted another mode of depreciating the value of this great acquisition. He relates the anecdote of the alchemist who was seeking the universal solvent—a fluid which was to dissolve every other substance. A friend inquired what he would keep it in; and then for the first time did the wise chemist discover the folly of his efforts. So, says the gentleman, in this new territory, we have the universal solvent, which is to destroy everything. What shall we do with it? How shall we keep it?

Now, sir, I think the gentleman will find this important acquisition a very powerful solvent; but it will be a solvent only of the Whig party. Yes, sir, the late war—commenced by the enemy—on our part, prosecuted with unexampled vigor and success—attended with the proudest and noblest

achievements, which have exalted our character in the eyes of the whole world—and concluded upon terms which secure us ample indemnity, and preserve our honor intact,—this war, thus conducted and ended, against the bitter opposition of the Whig party at home, and amidst disastrous financial convulsions in other parts of the world, yet leaving us with the highest public credit and the most flourishing revenues—all this, or something else in the present aspect of affairs, has indeed proved the “universal solvent” to the Whig party, and has already exerted a mighty influence in dissolving the ligaments of principle by which the elements of that party have heretofore been held together. To this phenomenon I shall direct the balance of my remarks. It is rather a change of the subject, Mr. Speaker, but it is fully warranted by the speeches of gentlemen on the other side.

The Whig party has resolved to enter into this canvass, without any declaration of principles, without any attempt to foreshadow the policy which they propose to substitute for that which has been so successful under the Democratic Administration. Not only did the Philadelphia Convention adjourn without erecting any political platform, but General Taylor himself has emphatically declared, in a public letter, that he will make no declaration of his principles. I have been an attentive listener to the debates in this House, and sometimes in the Senate. Repeated attempts have been made to wring from the supporters of General Taylor an avowal of his principles upon the most important questions. These attempts have failed in every instance. Instead of making an open and honest avowal of principles, gentlemen here have cunningly evaded the questions, and resorted to bold attacks upon the platform which the Democratic Convention did erect, and upon the principles which General Cass has freely avowed.

In the prosecution of this wily political game by our adversaries, we have witnessed some of the most extraordinary and audacious attempts to deceive and impose upon an honest people. I have before me the speech of a distinguished Senator from Delaware, [Mr. CLAYTON,] in which this bold assumption is paraded in glaring capitals, and made the text of the whole harangue:

“General Taylor, then, stands before the country not merely as a Whig, but as **THE GREAT REPRESENTATIVE AND CHAMPION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF THE RIGHT OF MAN TO SELF-GOVERNMENT.**”

The right of man to self-government, forsooth! Now, what is this right? Is it to be secured by voting for a man whose opinions, and principles, and qualifications for the Presidency are wholly unknown to those who are called upon to vote blindly for him? Mr. Speaker, I was always heretofore of opinion that self-government required thought, intelligence, discrimination, and that it involved the necessity of settled opinions upon great questions of governmental policy. I thought, when a freeman undertook to exercise the sacred privilege of self-government, he always proposed to himself an object to be accomplished—some great system of wise policy to be promoted. But now, it seems, self-government consists in blindly voting for a candidate who advocates no policy and declares no opinions!—in taking up a successful military chieftain, making a popular idol of him, and placing the destinies of the country in his hands,

without the slightest idea of the manner in which he proposes to conduct the Government, if elevated to the Executive chair! There was a time, sir, when eminent Whig statesmen considered this so far from being legitimate self-government, that they declared "WAR, PESTILENCE, AND FAMINE" to be infinitely preferable to it. The Whig party generally concurred in this sentiment. But now this old principle of that party has vanished at the touch of the universal solvent!

In France, recently, when arms were clashing in the streets of Paris, and thousands of bad citizens had banded together to overturn the regular Government, a military man was called to the head of the Republic. He crushed the attempted revolution, and the gutters of Paris were flooded with the blood of the French people. Trouble is still threatened, and General Cavaignac continues to be the President of France. No less than four generals are in his cabinet, and this "bundle of swords" is suspended over the heads of that unhappy nation. The emergency justified this proceeding in France. But where is the circumstance, in the condition of our country, which induces the Whigs, in opposition to their long-cherished principles, now to select a mere military man, without civil qualifications, fresh from fields of blood, to be clothed with the executive power of this great country? Was it self-government in France when General Cavaignac was invested with dictatorial powers? Will there be legitimate self-government here if General Taylor should be elected President of the United States, without any pledges or declarations of opinion?

I am aware, sir, that this modest claim that General Taylor is the "representative and champion of the right of man to self-government," is based upon his alleged peculiar views in reference to the veto power. Gentlemen are in the habit of representing this power as monarchical in its character, and frequent references are made to the absolute veto of the sovereign of Great Britain, which they truly allege has not been exercised for centuries. But this is a total misunderstanding of this feature of our Constitution. Our President has no absolute veto of bills passed by Congress. But the Constitution has wisely made it his duty to approve or disapprove every bill which may be passed by the two Houses. He must approve, or he must not; he cannot escape the alternative. Upon his conscience—upon his high responsibility to the people, he is bound to consider every act of Congress, and to give or refuse his sanction to it. I ask, if this was intended to be a mere idle ceremony—if it was intended the President should exercise no discretion, but sign all bills, whether in his conscience he approved them or not? No! This would be a gross perversion of the plain language of the Constitution. When the President refuses to sign a bill, it goes back to Congress, and if it fails to receive the vote of two-thirds, the Constitution says it shall not be a law. The President's action in this matter is nothing more nor less than a vote which the Constitution requires him to give. After he has given that vote, the Constitution disposes of the measure. The President is responsible for his votes, in his peculiar sphere, as we are responsible for ours.

It must be remembered, sir, that the President is the representative of the people as well as we. Al-

though electoral colleges intervene in his election, the people, nevertheless, always understand that they are voting directly for a particular man. A majority of this House does not always represent a majority of the people—I mean, are not necessarily elected by a majority of the people. Give me the power to gerrymander the States as I please, and I can elect both Houses of Congress, by the votes of a lean minority of the people. Then, sir, the veto power of the President is designed to operate as a check upon the other branch of the Government, so as more certainly to secure a perfect representation of the wishes and opinions of the people.

It is a wise provision in the Constitution. It ought not to be stricken out. The power has been freely used by the Presidents, commencing with Washington; and I believe it has not been abused half so often as the two Houses of Congress have abused their power of voting. Although I have differed in opinion with Mr. Polk as to some of the grounds on which his vetoes were based, I believe that, under the circumstances, with the war on our hands, and the necessity for creating a public debt to carry it on, even they will be approved by the judgment of the people; though, at the same time, I do not believe that a majority of the people will concur in Mr. Polk's extreme views upon the constitutionality of those measures.

But, sir, an act of gross deception is attempted in reference to General Taylor's opinions on this subject. Gentlemen here would have us believe that their candidate has avowed a distinct opposition to the exercise of the veto power. These gentlemen do not tell us whether General Taylor will veto this or that measure, nor whether he will advocate this or that policy. But they attempt to infer, from the vague expressions of the Allison letter, that he will not do what the Constitution requires every President to do—that is, to determine, upon every bill, whether he can approve it, consistently with his views of the public good. But this is an utter mistake. General Taylor has taken no such ground. He declares, in his Allison letter, that he will approve all bills except when "*clearly unconstitutional*," or passed with "*manifest haste and want of consideration*." Now, Mr. Speaker, who is to judge of the haste and want of consideration? Certainly, the President. If a bill should appear to him to be wrong and injurious to the public interest, though it had been hung up in Congress for months, would he not be justified in declaring it to have been passed without due "consideration?" And thus, it would come at last down to this point, that if the President believes the bill right, he will approve; if the contrary, he will not approve. And if "haste or consideration" is to be determined by the length of time and the relevancy of debate upon any given bill, I am very sure that almost every measure passed here might be pronounced hasty and unconsidered.

This boasted principle, then, upon which so much is claimed for General Taylor, does not deserve the name. It does not rise to the dignity of a principle. It is a vague declaration, which may mean anything or nothing, according to the views or wishes of each one who attempts to construe it. Let the friends of General Taylor no longer flaunt this idle and empty declaration in our face, and pretend that it has substance sufficient to be the basis of a great political campaign.

The futility and utter insufficiency of this pretended principle, as a guide for the people, is to be inferred from the acknowledged ignorance of gentlemen on the other side respecting the opinions of General Taylor, on some of the most important questions of the day. There is one question, sir, of overwhelming importance, upon which it is due to the people—it is due to the Southern people especially—that General Taylor's opinions should be explicitly known. Will he veto any proposition containing the principle of the Wilmot proviso? I heard this question propounded in this House, some time since, to one of my colleagues, [Col. HASKELL.] To my utter astonishment, he replied that he did not know. Southern gentlemen, then, are supporting General Taylor for the Presidency without having the slightest assurance that the rights of the South will be protected by his election. Northern gentlemen, however, entertain, or pretend to entertain, well-settled opinions on this subject. I know not what assurance they have received beyond that contained in the celebrated Signal letter. But as General Taylor sometimes writes letters and requests them not to be published, he may have given some secret and satisfactory pledges to these gentlemen. At all events, it is certain that they are themselves satisfied, and are seeking to instill the same confidence into the minds of the people of the North. The gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. ASHMUN,] in a letter some time since addressed to his constituents, and extensively published, made the following declaration in reference to General Taylor:

"His declared sentiments are a guarantee that he will never in the slightest manner interfere with the action of Congress, when it shall forbid the existence of slavery in our newly-acquired territories."

Such, sir, are the declarations sent to the North. And Southern gentlemen here, upon this floor, admit that they know nothing to the contrary! Will this be satisfactory to the Southern people? Is this the mode in which their dearest rights are to be secured and protected? I tell you, sir, this will never meet their just expectations. They will demand something more than this. In my opinion, no Southern man will dare to stand before his people and tell them he does not know what General Taylor will do on this vital question. They will require to be informed—they *must* know—they *will* know, before they will give their votes for the Presidency to any living man. When Northern men allege, upon good grounds, that General Taylor will abandon the South and support their views—when, in their written documents, they proclaim this to the world, Southern men must be prepared to deny and to disprove it, if they expect to be tolerated by their constituents. There must be no deception—no double-dealing here. It is a matter of life and death—a matter of safety, of pride, of honor,—and the South will permit no man to trifle with interests of such magnitude. Let not Southern gentlemen deceive themselves. No heroic actions, no laurels of victory, no military glory, can ever conceal the fatal defect here, if all be not fair, and open, and honest.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard much of the two editions of the life of General Cass published at the Globe office in this city. Gentlemen have endeavored to make some party capital out of an imaginary fraud, pretended to have been discov-

ered in those two publications. But, in truth, there was no material difference, and certainly nothing contradictory, in the character of the documents. They were not designed for different sections of the country; and, to my certain knowledge, they were sent indiscriminately to all quarters.

Be this as it may, however, one would suppose that the party which raised such a clamor upon this trifling discovery could not themselves be guilty of the slightest impropriety of a similar kind. An honest man might be justly surprised, if, after this, he should find any fraud attempted to be perpetrated by the Whigs. Now, sir, if you will step down stairs into the folding-room of this Capitol, you will find thousands of a certain document there, in preparation for distribution, which I will warrant was never designed to be read in the South. Here is the title of this precious pamphlet: "*Please circulate.*" "*REASONS GOOD AND TRUE FOR SUPPORTING THE NOMINATION OF GENERAL ZACHARY TAYLOR.*" In looking over this document, I find that it contains the letter of a distinguished Senator from Massachusetts, generally known as "honest John." It also contains a celebrated letter of the honorable gentleman from Connecticut, [TRUMAN SMITH.] And last, but not least, comes an appendix, in which the letter of a certain Rev. Mr. Lamb is made to figure extensively. In that letter he gives the following account of General Taylor's opinions:

"With regard to slavery, and extension of territory, I assure you, that neither for a slave-market nor any other object was General Taylor in favor of conquest and annexation. He was not in favor of receiving Texas into our Union, nor in favor of the recent war with Mexico. The only evidence of his being in favor of slavery, that I ever saw or heard of, was the fact that he did what every man at the South must do, if he would have servants, viz: either own or hire slaves. I do well remember that a part at least of the colored people living in his family could read well, and were very pious. I never heard a word from the General in favor of the slave system, but, on the contrary, his decided preference for the institutions and customs of the North.

"It is a pity that General Taylor should be made out a pro-slavery man because his Government keeps him at the South, or for the wrong of allowing his plantation to be on the Mississippi, instead of the banks of the Connecticut. We are allowed to hang no man upon an inference.

"I assure you that, if elected, he will do more for peace and emancipation than any northern man would be allowed to do."

Here, sir, is a statement of one of those canting hypocrites, who do not hesitate to pervert the influence of their sacred office to the foulest party purposes, endorsed and sent out from this Capitol by thousands, under the frank of members of Congress. For what market are these missiles intended? Will any portion of them be sent into the slaveholding States? Not one! Will you dare to tell the southern people, that General Taylor has "a decided preference for the institutions and customs of the North?" Will you insult them by the assertion, that a man who owns two or three hundred slaves is not "a pro-slavery man, because his Government keeps him at the South," and he is therefore obliged to be a slaveholder, against his own pious inclination? No, sir! You will not publish these things in the South. The reverend author of them knows too well in what latitude they will flourish best, and bear most fruit. And those who send forth these papers from this Capitol have a very clear instinct as to the direction which should be given to them. Yes, sir;

this is only a legitimate part of that game of deception by which either the North or the South, or both, are to be cheated and defrauded, if possible, in the coming election. Southern men will not answer for General Taylor's opinions; northern men assert their belief that he will not veto a bill containing the "Wilmot proviso." What northern man on this floor has yet denied this, or will dare to do so?

Mr. ASHMUN stood up to answer; but asked the gentleman from Tennessee to answer first, whether General Cass was in favor of extending slavery into territory now free?

Mr. STANTON. I have his declaration here. [He paused to look among the papers on his desk.]

Mr. ASHMUN. No dodging. I want the gentleman to answer that.

Mr. STANTON. General Cass never dodges—not even the letters of his friends, when the postage is not paid. I will answer the gentleman completely, by reading from the well-known letter to Mr. Nicholson. General Cass says:

"Briefly, then, I am opposed to the exercise of any jurisdiction by Congress over this subject; and I am in favor of leaving to the people of any territory which may be hereafter acquired, the right to regulate it for themselves, under the general principles of the Constitution. Because, 1st, I do not see in the Constitution any grant of the requisite power to Congress," &c., &c.

I conceive that these sentences of General Cass's letter, besides others contained in it, are altogether explicit. They are sufficient for me, and for the South.

Mr. ASHMUN. Is General Cass in favor of the compromise which has been lately proposed on this subject, which gives the whole thing into the hands of Congress?

Mr. STANTON. I understand the compromise bill very differently; for, in my judgment, it is in perfect conformity with the sentiments declared by General Cass. In that bill, Congress does not propose to legislate on the subject of slavery, but prohibits the Territorial Governments from doing so. If the compromise is to be carried out in good faith, of course Congress will not attempt to violate it by any further legislation. Now, General Cass says Congress has no power to do so. He also says: "In various respects, the Territories differ from the States. Some of their rights are inchoate, and they do not possess the peculiar attributes of sovereignty." In another place, speaking of the same subject, he says: "They can do so, at any rate, as soon as their political independence is recognized by their admission into the Union." It is clear that General Cass does not contemplate any legislation by the Territories on the subject of slavery, until they shall become States. This, I repeat, is in precise conformity to the compromise bill of the Senate.

Will the gentleman now tell us General Taylor's position on the compromise, or on any other question?

Mr. ASHMUN. I don't know General Taylor's opinions on any domestic question. [Laughter.] I suppose that General Taylor, living in the section of country where he does, maintains those opinions which belong generally to enlightened, honest, patriotic, and moral men of the South. But I do not believe that he maintains an opinion inconsistent with his published declarations. I do not believe that, if the people, by the act of their

representatives in Congress, should refuse to extend slavery into Territories now free, he would resist such an expression of the popular will. Can you say as much for General Cass?

Mr. STANTON. I have already said precisely the contrary.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is another prominent personage, whose opinions on this subject are of vital importance. How stands MILLARD FILLMORE upon the principle of the "Wilmot proviso?" I assert that he is in favor of it. And I now call upon any gentleman from the North to deny this if he can. There are gentlemen here who are neighbors of Mr. Fillmore, and who know his opinions well. I challenge any one of them to rise here and deny what I have asserted. I pause for a reply. No man denies it. I challenge any northern man to say that he does not believe this of Mr. Fillmore. Not one of you ventures to deny it.

I now ask any southern man to deny that I have truly stated Mr. Fillmore's opinions. You are all silent.

Mr. GAYLE said he would. He would ask the gentleman from Tennessee a question. [Laughter suppressed.] He was a man of few words. In answer to the gentleman's question, he would ask him, in his turn, whether he ever knew Mr. Fillmore to vote for the Wilmot proviso?

Mr. STANTON. I have appealed in vain for an answer, both to the North and to the South. I have, therefore, the right to assume, what no man on this floor dares to deny, that MILLARD FILLMORE is in favor of the Wilmot proviso. The fact stands admitted by the silent acquiescence of gentlemen on all sides of this Chamber.

Mr. DUER. I wish to ask the gentleman a question.

Mr. STANTON. I don't give way for questions. Let gentlemen answer my questions if they can. Let them answer for their effort to make the people vote for a man whose principles are unknown or misrepresented.

Mr. DUER, (raising his voice above "the noise and confusion.") Will the gentleman answer me whether it is a principle with his party to vote for no man who is in favor of the Wilmot proviso?

Mr. STANTON. I have propounded plain questions, and I am determined that gentlemen shall not avoid them by making other questions.

Now, Mr. Speaker, how stand the States of this Union in regard to slavery? We have fifteen slave States, and fifteen free, represented each by thirty members of the Senate. The Vice President to be elected in November next will occupy the chair of that important body; and all questions, when there is a tie, must be decided by his casting vote. And yet southern gentlemen are calling upon their people to support, for the second office in the Government, a man who is here, to-day, acknowledged to be utterly hostile to their interests! For Vice President, one known to be against us; for President, one who is claimed to be so, without any contradiction either by his friends or himself—these are the men presented for the votes of the southern people, and sustained by the efforts of southern Whigs!

I wish to refer you, Mr. Speaker, to one more subject, and to read another short quotation from the Whig electioneering document to which I have

already referred. It is only from these documents that we can get any kind of insight into the plans and purposes of the party which supports General Taylor for the Presidency. I read a passage from the letter of the honorable gentleman from Connecticut, [Mr. TRUMAN SMITH,] which runs thus:

"The former we have fortunately done by nominating General Zachary Taylor as a candidate for the Presidency; and if we elect him—as I doubt not we shall—nothing will remain for us but to convince our fellow-citizens of the West, Northwest, and Southwest, by liberal legislation on the subject of the public lands, and on harbor and river improvements, that we are their true friends, in order to give us a permanent ascendancy in the Government. For my part, I am resolved that the public lands shall no longer be a great corruption fund, to be used by demagogues for mischievous political purposes; and I intend hereafter to vote liberal appropriations for such objects as shall appear to be useful or important to the West."

Here is something new indeed. General Taylor has not made known his opinions in reference to the public lands; but this honorable gentleman, one of his most prominent friends, informs us that hereafter *he* intends to adopt "liberal legislation on the subject of the public lands." And for what purpose? Impelled by what motive? *"To convince our fellow-citizens of the West, Northwest, and Southwest, that we are their true friends;"* and in order *"to give us a permanent ascendancy in the Government!"* I am amazed, Mr. Speaker, at the bold audacity of this declaration. Avowedly, the object is not the public good, but the desire for office and power! For this purpose, an important change of policy is *promised!* Isay, a change! That honorable gentleman has never yet voted for the graduation of the price of the public lands, or for any of those great measures in reference to them, which the western people have demanded as "liberal" and just. The Whig party has generally voted against them. The votes of that whole party, to a man, are recorded against the graduation bill of the last Congress. And now the gentleman from Connecticut avows his determination to change his policy! Does he suppose the western people will believe him? Does he imagine they will be so easily duped, as to take to their confidence, as "*true friends*," those who have always been against them? Does he dream that we will give "*a permanent ascendancy in the Government*," to those whose conduct has never heretofore entitled them to our confidence? The bait, sir, is rather too plain to be caught at, even by the silliest gudgeon in the West. When we wish to secure the measures which we believe to be just, we shall endeavor to do it by the election of those who have

always advocated them, and not by that of men who promise now to do what they have heretofore always resisted.

Something was said the other day, Mr. Speaker, in reference to a certain published letter of your own. With your permission, sir, I will read a very short extract, as follows:

"The Whigs of the Union can elect General Taylor President of the United States if they will. They can elect nobody else."

Now, I would like to know, in the first place, where you get the certain information that the Whigs can elect General Taylor; and, in the second, why they can elect nobody else. But I do not presume to catechize you, Mr. Speaker; I do not ask you to reply. Perhaps that would be undignified, sitting as you do in that chair.

The SPEAKER said the Chair has the right to answer, and avails himself of it to say, that the argument in the letter referred to was, that the Whigs could elect nobody but a regularly-nominated candidate.

Mr. STANTON. I was going to answer the question for you, Mr. Speaker, and to state what I supposed to be the foundation of your opinion. Whatever you may think, sir, I know there are many who consider General Taylor's strength to consist in the fact that he has no opinions, or that his opinions are unknown. And the various matters to which I have referred in my remarks, evince plainly that the plan of the Whig campaign of this year is to make General Taylor all things to all men, in order to elect him President. He is justly entitled to gratitude and high reputation as a military man; and your hope and expectation are, to sink all considerations of public policy, and in a frenzy of excitement to carry the people in his favor. You know perfectly well that at this moment—the proud moment of triumph for every cherished Democratic principle—the old Whig policy could not stand before the public judgment. Hence it is that "*the Whigs can elect no other man.*" No man of known Whig opinions will venture upon the hopeless contest. Concealment, deception, and fraud as to principles, with some little glory, won in a war which they themselves have characterized as "*unconstitutional and unnecessary*"—these seem to be the whole foundation for that hope of success which your party has so vauntingly proclaimed. November will test the strength of that hollow reliance, and to that decisive test I now appeal.

